



Harmer Time
SARAH HARMER MAKES HER RETURN TO THE CAPITAL CITY. SHE MIGHT EVEN BREAK OUT HER NEWFOUND DRUM SKILLS.
SEE A&E, PG. 11

THE GATEWAY



volume CI number 26 ♦ the official student newspaper at the university of alberta ♦ www.thegatewayonline.ca ♦ tuesday, january 18, 2011



Go Loko
Gateway product testers get their hands on a can of the malt liquor energy drink. Mayhem ensues.
A&E, PAGE 12



Smashing up the court
The Pandas volleyball team extended their winning streak to five games this weekend.
SPORTS, PAGE 15

How not to be a hack
Justin Bell provides some essential advice to those aspiring to the Students' Union executive in March's election.
OPINION, PAGE 6

Why Wikipedia shouldn't be easier to edit
OPINION, PAGE 8

Students complain of late grades

Registrar says 95 per cent of grades are posted, remainder should be in by end of week

SIMON YACKULIC
Deputy News Editor

A number of students have been complaining about not receiving their grades, despite assurances from the Office of the Registrar that most students have now received their grades from fall semester.

Sarah Malik, a fourth-year arts student looking to continue her studies after her undergrad, ran into problems when her grades weren't in as early as she expected.

Malik applied for a graduate program at the University of Toronto, which was due January 10. She didn't get her last grades until January 14, and had to apply to the U of T for an extension.

"They gave me an extension, so based on that, it seems like it will be fine. But it creates stress for me. It creates problems for them and all the other applicants will be evaluated before me. It's a frustrating situation all around."

Malik sought the help of the Registrar's Office, but wasn't satisfied with their response to her concerns.

"It was frustrating. I don't think they understood that everything had a huge effect on my future," Malik said. "I talked to several people. The first person said she couldn't do anything, but she'd check to see if my department had submitted their grades and it turned out that they had a long time ago. So the delay was on the Registrar's end."

A number of other students

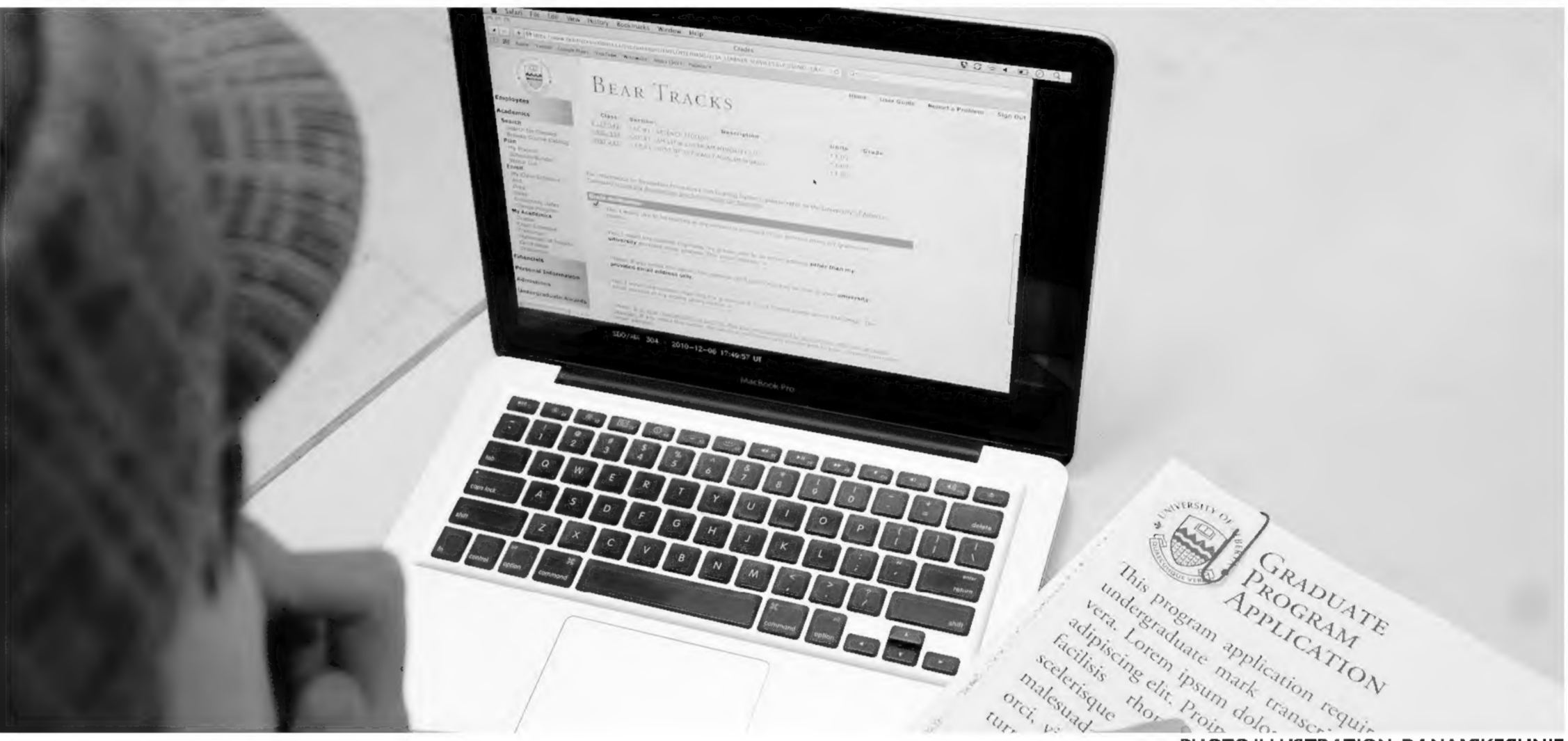


PHOTO ILLUSTRATION: DAN MCKECHNIE

contacted *The Gateway* with similar stories. Doug Schneider, a second-year computing science student, has an important scholarship due January 19 and grew concerned as the deadline loomed while he waited for grades.

"Normally I have them before Christmas, or just after New Year's at the latest," Schneider said, adding that he felt the Registrar could have helped him out more. "I went in to ask about them and they said 'oh I don't know' and gave me the runaround."

Schneider said he finally received his grades last Friday, so he was able to meet the scholarship deadline.

Ada Schumde, the Associate Registrar, said that 95 per cent of grades have

been returned so far. Furthermore, 65 per cent of grades had been returned before Christmas break. While some courses had to be in earlier, under the regulations in the university calendar, all grades should be in to the Registrar by January 18.

Professors submit grades to their department, which then submit the grades to the Registrar. Schumde said that the Registrar typically gets grades up within a day of receiving them. Assuming the marks make it to the Registrar by today, Schumde said that they should be out to students "by the end of the week for sure."

Schumde said that the Registrar's Office would help students who had

delays in receiving their grades.

"If a student contacts us and is inquiring about the status of their grade, we'll follow up," Schumde explained. "We would contact the department and we would explain the situation, and would [ask] the department to get the information the student needs."

Students' Union Vice President (Academic) James Eastham didn't feel there was a problem this year.

"It's especially important because some scholarship deadlines are fast approaching," he said. "It's not acceptable that it happens, but I don't think it's a very widespread problem and in the instances where it does happen, it's taken reasonably seriously."

U of A med students delivering inner-city healthcare

RACHEL SINGER
News Writer

A new program that sends residents into emergency rooms, shelters, and clinics in the downtown core will have University of Alberta students delivering healthcare to Edmonton's inner-city community.

The new elective is open to residents in family medicine, psychiatry, internal medicine, and emergency medicine. Dr. Kathryn Dong, one of the program's creators, said the class emerged from a desire to create awareness of unique problems faced by this group in society. She pointed to the example of how a homeless person with diabetes copes, as opposed to a more typical patient.

"I want to increase awareness about the social contributors to health [...] which are often for this group much more important in terms of their overall health than some of the

traditional risk factors."

Dong explained that the goals of the elective are two-fold. They hope to improve health access for Edmonton's inner-city groups, while also providing valuable experience for students.

"Our overall goal is to improve health outcomes and health access to people living in Edmonton's downtown core. In particular, vulnerable groups that have trouble with addiction or unstable housing," she said.

Dong added that new physicians need to learn how to interact with patients in the proper manner.

"How do you ask someone within a few minutes of meeting them what their drug use patterns are? Do they inject drugs? What are their sexual practices?" Dong said. "You want physicians to be people that ask those questions in a sensitive manner so that they can get an honest answer."

She pointed to informal surveys done by her group showing that many

inner-city patients feel their doctor is not comfortable managing their social problems, therefore a critical aspect of the inner-city elective is to teach physician how to approach and provide quality care to these people.

The inner-city elective is different from traditional electives residents take. While the program provides some experience in the hospital, part of it is also spent in the community.

"[Participants are] going to the shelter and seeing what that looks like and learning what services are available [...] How is that going to affect me telling them to fill this \$50 prescription for antibiotics and keep it in the fridge? Is that really realistic?" Dong said.

Dong also hopes that this elective will create physicians who are really interested in advocating for changes on a social level.

"I think it is our role as practitioners to really have a voice in this area and I

think right now we don't have a very strong one and we need to improve that," Dong said.

Three residents in emergency medicine from the U of A have taken the elective and two more residents in family medicine will be involved this year. The future of the program depends on funding.

"Our initial funding is for three years. So we are looking for ongoing funding but that can be challenging," Dong said. "We'd love to expand it, but we need to develop more of an infrastructure. We need to, I think, compensate our community partners before we expand it too much further."

Dong, an emergency department physician, created the elective along with infectious disease specialist Dr. Ryan Cooper, family medicine physician Dr. Ginetta Salvaggio, and Dr. Matt Rose, the medical director at the Boyle McCauley Health Centre.

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Comments, concerns, or complaints about the Gateway's content or operations should be first sent to the Editor-in-Chief at the address above. If the Editor-in-Chief is unable to resolve a complaint, it may be taken to the Gateway Student Journalism Society's Board of Directors; beyond that, appeal is to the non-partisan Society OmbudsBoard. The chairs of the Board of Directors and the OmbudsBoard can be reached at the address above.

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colophon

The Gateway is created using Macintosh computers, HP Scanjet flatbed scanners, and a Nikon Super Cool Scan optical film scanner. Adobe InDesign is used for layout. Adobe Illustrator is used for vector images, while Adobe Photoshop is used for raster images. Adobe Acrobat is used to create PDF files which are burned directly to plates to be mounted on the printing press. Text is set in a variety of sizes, styles, and weights of FENICE, Joanna, Kepler and Whitney. The Manitoban is the Gateway's sister paper, and we love her dearly, though "not in that way." The Gateway's games of choice are Conquist and Wing Commander.

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DAN MCKECHNIE

THERE MIGHT BE SOME SNOW OUTSIDE Students trekked to campus in cold temperatures and deep snow Monday, which resulted in an exit closure in SUB.

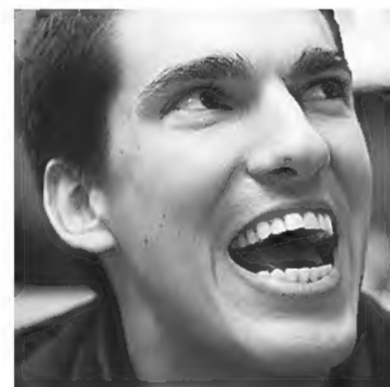
CLARIFICATION

In the January 11 news article entitled "Webmail moves to Google by end of month," *The Gateway* reported that "staff and students will notice a new look to their email at the end of the month when the U of A transfers over to Google Apps." However, migration to the Google Apps software will start at the end of this month for students, with a phased approach for staff and faculty to follow. *The Gateway* regrets any confusion this may have caused.DON'T WORRY,
WE'RE BACK!*The Gateway* took a break from publishing last Thursday to attend a journalism conference in Montreal, and we forgot to tell you not to look for a new issue that day. Oops. But starting today, we're back to our regular Tuesday/Thursday publishing schedule, and we pledge to inform readers in the future of any newspaper breaks.

STREETERS

As you may be aware, there's a lot of snow.

What would you prefer to have a lot of in your life, and why?

Compiled and photographed by
Scott Fenwick and Dan McKechnie**Michael Oness**
Business IV**Jeanel Ashmeade**
ALES I**Dylan Macgregor**
Science IV**Mildred Lau**
Arts VII

I would prefer to have a lot of love and intimate relations because it makes me feel good and happy.

Probably a lot of sand because I love the beach, which would involve water. I love water. It's a lot warmer than the snow.

A lot more music in my life. That is definitely what I could go for. I want to meet people that just blow my mind every day with anything and everything, that's what I want. That's the only inspiration that's left these days. It comes across as crass maybe, but I like feeling other people in a very non-communicational manner through the instruments. That's the really pure way of knowing someone.

I prefer to have a lot of friends rather than snow just because friends give you a feeling of warmth that snow definitely doesn't give you.

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NEW U OF A PROPERTY Pictured above is the view of the \$23-million Mactaggart estate from the road.

Debate ensues about potential use of house donated to U of A

SIWEI CHEN
News Staff

A large house donated to the University of Alberta before the Christmas break has solicited divided opinions on campus, as various ideas are put forward about its use.

It has been speculated that the \$23-million Ramsay Heights estate, donated by Sandy and Cécile Mactaggart, will be used as a conference centre. However, a few individuals have voiced support for selling the property to re-invest in students. The idea had been brought up in letters to the *Edmonton Journal* by Dr. Cecily Mills and N. P. Gantly, advocating for the sale of the property.

However, according to O’Neil Outar, the chief development officer for the Office of Development and Alumni affairs, it is “premature and inappropriate to speculate at this stage on how [the university] would like this to be used.”

“In the long-term, [gifts] help to generate revenues, [...] research

opportunities, [and] facilities that we need to do our business. That’s an important message that we need to convey and not, I hope, get lost in the speculation,” Outar said.

Outar stressed that the decision has not yet been made about the use of the house and those decisions will be made by a team led by the Provost, Carl Amrhein. Outar also stated that he had “no idea” at this point how much it would cost annually to maintain the large home, but they would be “thoughtful” in their decision.

“Ultimately, when the university [...] receives any asset, there needs to be a careful calculation as to what is the long term benefit. We are in the long-term education and research business, and we need to weigh those decisions very carefully,” he added.

Students’ Union President Nick Dehod also considers the inspection of investment opportunities prudent for maximizing benefit to students.

“I think that if selling the house is the best thing to do for the institution in terms of helping students, then

that’s certainly an option. I also think that there’s ways in which keeping the house could provide benefit as well,” Dehod said. “I think that [the decision] really depends currently on what makes the most sense. It could also be something that the university holds onto and it could have greater value later on and sell it later on.”

Those who have suggestions for the use of this donation can still bring them forth and are encouraged to do so by contacting the Office of the Provost.

“I think it’s great for the institution, I think it’s great for students. Although we don’t know exactly what will happen yet with the land, I think it’s still positive to see that kind of generosity,” Dehod said.

The house is one of a number of donations by the Mactaggarts to the university. Sandy has served as both the U of A’s chancellor and chair of the board of directors. Other donations the Mactaggarts have made include a 40-hectare natural sanctuary in Whitemud Creek and a collection of Chinese costumes and art.

University reveals fossilized fish skull at Paleontology Museum

HAYLEY DUNNING
News Staff

A fossil from the oceans of the Paleozoic era has been unveiled at the University of Alberta’s Paleontology Museum, shedding light on an ancient fossil fang found in southern Alberta nearly a century ago.

The new addition is a cast of the skull of the Dunkleosteus — a six-metre-long armoured fish that lived 360 million years ago, originally found in Exshaw, an hour west of Calgary. Dunkleosteus ruled the seas as a beast of the class Placodermi, a group of armoured fish that died out at the end of the Devonian period. They were the largest fish that ever lived, at an estimated 10 metres long, and they may have even grown beyond that size by eating relatives of squids and octopi.

“The Dunkleosteus is really the iconic bad predator of the Paleozoic. Lots of kids know what it is, so to have it in our museum is kind of nice because it is extremely well known, and makes a big impression on the visitors. They may come initially to see dinosaurs and find out there’s some other big things,” said Mark Wilson, a University of Alberta paleontologist.

Wilson also said that the skull cast helps to illustrate the scale of the ancient fang already housed at the



U of A’s museum, which he believes came from an even larger fish — possibly the largest predator that existed before the time of the dinosaurs.

The ancient fang, from the genus Gorgonichthys, was collected by the university’s first professor of geology, John A. Allan, and described in an article by another iconic local geologist, P.S. Warren.

Although other, more complete examples of the fish have been found in Ohio, none are as large as the specimen recovered in Alberta.

The Dunkleosteus skull allowed researchers in Cleveland to determine that it had the strongest bite force of

any fish, ancient or modern. While the U of A’s fang is larger, Wilson is unsure whether it would have had a more powerful bite.

“We have done some research with the fang, trying to estimate the size of the fish, and trying to decide what we would need to know in order to estimate its bite force. The preliminary results were that it didn’t necessarily have a bigger bite force than the Dunkleosteus.”

The Department of Earth and Atmospheric Science’s Paleontology Museum is located in the basement of EAS, and is open Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

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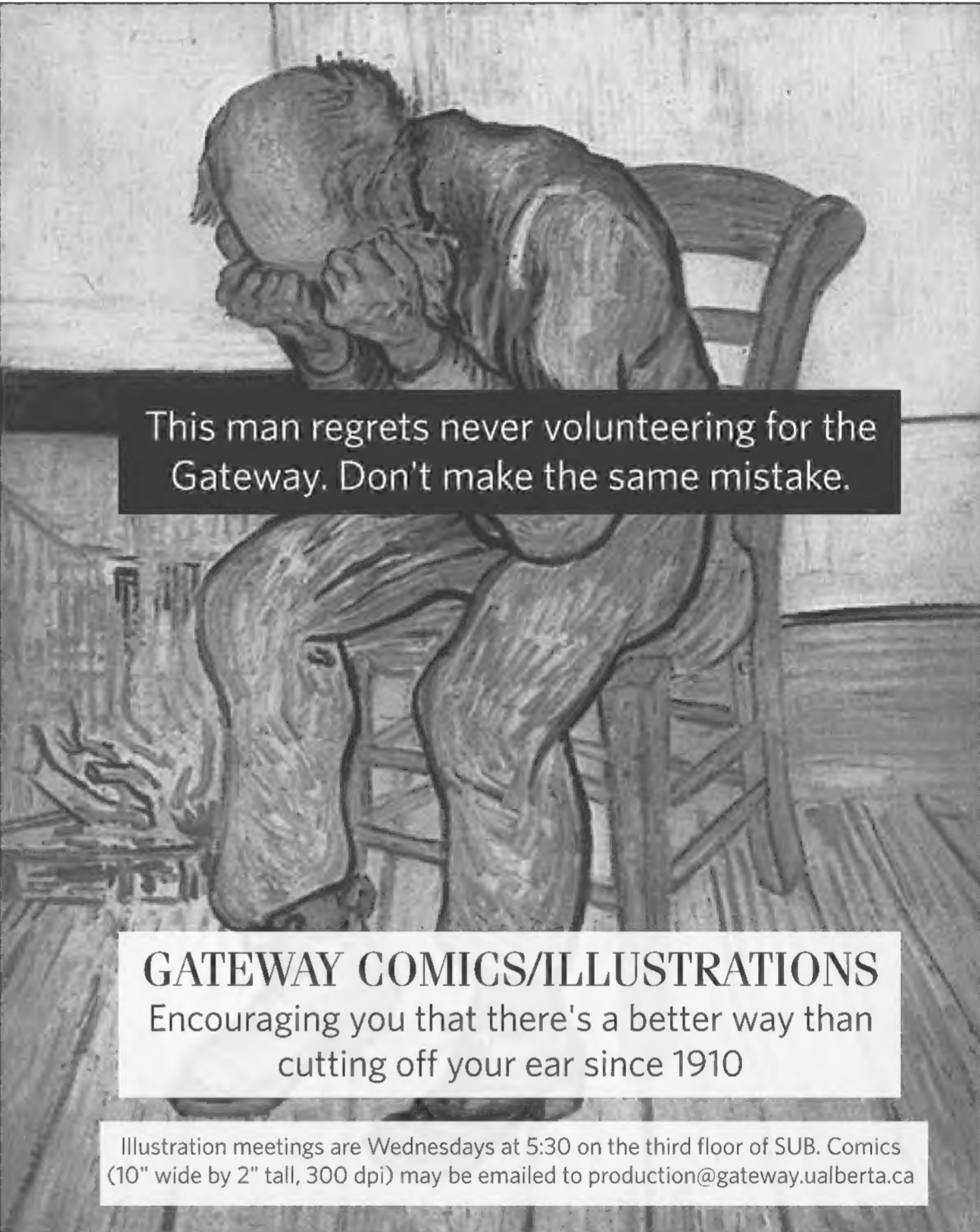
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Winter Term 2011 Registration Deadline

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- ▶ **Your Campus Computing ID (CCID) and password**—you need this information to access Bear Tracks. If you need help with your CCID please contact the Academic Information and Communication Technologies (AICT) office at www.ualberta.ca/HELP.
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Bear Tracks Hours of Operation:

- ▶ Familiarize yourself with Bear Tracks Hours of Operation at www.registrar.ualberta.ca/beartracks

Note: It is your responsibility to safeguard your CCID and password.



UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR AND STUDENT AWARDS

Rebranded AntiFreeze welcomes students back with winter fun

SIWEI CHEN
News Staff

A re-organized AntiFreeze welcomed students back to school last week with a competition that had teams fighting for the top prize in aerobics dancing, scrapbooking, and catwalk modelling.

AntiFreeze is an annual competition held by the Students' Union which features a week of activities where teams of 10 compete against each other in indoor and outdoor events. The 2011 edition saw a series of changes, including the doubling of team members from five to 10. Organizers also cut the evening league due to the change in member requirements.

"This year we wanted to rebrand AntiFreeze and make it hopefully more accessible to more of the population because I guess a lot of times, teams participate three or four years in a row, so we were hoping to get it out to as many new students as possible," Students' Union Vice-President (Student Life) Rory Tighe said.

However, those who did participate in the competition spoke positively about it. A member of the team Schrödinger's Cat recounted an underdog win from earlier in the week.

"Ten minutes before [the Snow Watch event], we didn't have enough people to do it, so we were going to just forfeit it, but we ended up getting people together and coming in first place," said Brandon Cathcart, a first-year engineering student.

The competition was fierce as team after team put forth their best effort in



SUPPLIED/ROBERT LEES-MILLER

FACEPLANT! Teams competed in a race through the snow this year.

and out of regular play in the hopes of garnering more points from the judges. The top prize was an all-expenses paid trip to Marmot Basin for the winning team.

"There's spirit points for how much fun you're having and how much you're amping up your team, so teams make their own cheers, they have mascots, they wave their flags, and try to sway the judges' opinions at events

outside of normal play. I'd say they're pretty competitive," Tighe said.

A series of evening events were also organized, including a movie night, headphone disco, and the hypnotist Wayne Lee.

"I hope to elicit some feedback both on welcome week and AntiFreeze — I'd love to hear it. And hopefully [students] thought that this was a little bit of a welcome back," Tighe said.

Law students preparing for annual musical for charity

ANDREW JEFFREY
News Staff

After months of preparation and anticipation, the Faculty of Law is almost ready to reveal its creative side as it presents its 16th annual Law Show.

The Law Show is a student-driven musical organized annually by the Faculty of Law. This year's show is taking place at the Myer Horowitz Theatre on February 4 and 5 and is a comedy entitled *Draculaw*, which parodies current pop culture trends as well as making jokes about legal studies itself.

"It's based on Dracula, so we're kind of capitalizing on the *trend du jour* with the whole vampire thing [...] It's always a mix of slapstick comedy and just whatever popular topics are trending," said Jillian Gamez, director of this year's show.

"We definitely try to make fun of ourselves in the show. Part of the reason why we have the show is to make ourselves more accessible to the community and show that we do have a different side to our daily, boring courtroom work," said Marc Yu, this year's producer.

Draculaw was written over the summer by a team of writers involved in the Faculty of Law. This was followed by weekly rehearsals throughout the fall term and into January as the students putting time into this production balance the commitment with the regular coursework of their classes.

"The professors are pretty understanding. We do our best to schedule it so not everyone has to be rehearsing at

exactly the same time so they can still attend classes. Most people are pretty organized and they definitely desire to come, so they make the time and we really appreciate it," Gamez said.

A large number of students not only get involved with singing, dancing, acting, and the band, but students in their second and third years in law also help find sponsors and donations for the silent auction that coincides with the show.

Yu hopes that the auction and charity donations will hopefully bring in a larger audience as well.

"That's actually one of our main goals this year — just to try and expand it past law students and family and friends [...] We try to be funny without going over the top so we're really trying to invite other faculties," Yu said.

"We're trying to spread the word and raise awareness about it. Because a lot of people don't really know about Law Show, we're physically isolated at least from the rest of campus. It's definitely something that we want people to come and see."

Proceeds from the show generated from ticket sales, the auctions, and DVD sales are always donated to a local charity. Money raised will go to the Alberta Council for Women's Shelters for the third year in a row.

Those interested in getting tickets for the 2011 Law Show can email lawshow@ualberta.ca and have tickets held for them at the Myer Horowitz Theatre box office. Tickets will also be available at the door for \$16 on February 4 and \$20 on February 5.



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JANUARY 21
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Aboriginal, small-town students more likely to drop out of school

EMMA GODMERE
CUP Ottawa Bureau Chief

OTTAWA (CUP) — Recent research out of the University of Ottawa suggests certain students are more at risk of facing obstacles than others when it comes to completing their postsecondary education.

Three studies released by the Measuring the Effectiveness of Student Aid project on December 13 compared male and female, rural and urban, and Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students and offered several notable conclusions — including, for example, that male students are more likely than their female counterparts to drop out of college in their first or second year of studies.

Ross Finnie, associate professor at the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs at the University of Ottawa, was the lead author on the studies, which surveyed more than 10,000 students across Canada between 2007 and 2009.

“We’re identifying the sort of students that are at risk and it’s different than what people have been assuming, which is very important,” he said, noting that he was even surprised at some of the data.

Finnie said that while educators and government have their own ideas of just who the students at risk of dropping out of their studies are, this research brings in some new information.

“Things like not having a history of education in the family is a huge determinant of access, whether or not you go to university or college,” he explained.

“But then to find once people are in, it has almost no predictive power as to whether or not they’ll continue on, that was a very interesting and important finding.”

In terms of access, one study looked at how students had saved up for their postsecondary education and found that students from smaller communities are more likely than their urban counterparts to have saved money on their own for school, while students from larger areas are more likely to have family members who saved tuition money for them.

30.8

Percentage of Aboriginal dropouts in Canada

13

Percentage of non-Aboriginal dropouts in Canada

On top of that, students from larger urban areas reported receiving less government aid and money from summer jobs than their rural counterparts. Another study noted that females were more likely than males to be concerned about their collection of student debt.

In terms of dropout rates, males attending college were more likely to leave their studies in first or second year, compared to their female colleagues — 25.2 per cent of men dropped out, compared to 21.5 per

cent of women. A larger gap, however, was found between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, where 30.8 per cent of Aboriginal youth left postsecondary studies in first or second year, compared to 13 per cent of non-Aboriginal student who have done the same.

Deborah Loosemore is director of advancement and external relations at Algoma University, where they have seen some success in improving retention rates.

“[We] have developed programs that are specifically designed to assist Aboriginal students who often follow a non-traditional route to university and so come with a different set of potential barriers that they might need assistance in overcoming to be successful,” she said, adding that 20 per cent of Algoma students self-identify as Aboriginal, Métis, Inuit, or First Nations.

“One of the things that we have been focusing on for a number of years is really increasing the retention rate from first to second year and so we’ve instituted a wide range of student services and support,” she continued.

According to Loosemore, Algoma provides a “first generation mentorship program” that matches new students with those in later years to engage in peer-to-peer support. For Aboriginal students, dedicated counselling, academic advising, and cultural supports are available. Between the 2008–09 and 2009–10 academic years, Algoma’s retention rate from first year into second year jumped from 73.1 per cent to 78 per cent.



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“Vice President Tighe, your speaking privileges have been revoked. I don’t know if I can do that, but it’s done.”

STEVEN DOLLANSKY
Speaker

—on overreaching the limits of his own power

COUNCIL FORUM

Written by Justin Bell

Students’ Council meets every second Tuesday in the Council Chambers in University Hall at 6 p.m. Council meetings are open to all students. The next meeting will be held on January 25, where free food will be provided for all attendees.

The first meeting back of the semester provided a confusing mix of pizza and fresh vegetables. While delicious, it was a strange combination. So if you’re at all interested in student politics, swing by, fill your belly, and get your democracy on.

PRESENTING THE ‘PIRG

Alberta Public Interest Research Group (APIRG) members Dominique Blackwell, an APIRG board member, and Jess Warren, the outreach co-ordinator for the organization, gave a presentation about the campus group.

Now 10 years old, the organization is funded by a dedicated fee unit of \$3.06 per year for full-time students. They use the money to fund various student groups, focusing on social justice issues.

APIRG is run by a board of directors, with three full-time staff and volunteers implementing the decisions. They will be running their board elections at the same time as the SU executive elections in March, with nomination packages

available as of January 17.

WE’RE IN YOUR INTERWEBS

Board of Governors representative Craig Turner, wearing his other hat as SU digital media co-ordinator, gave a presentation along with executive director Mark Dumouchel about the upcoming launch of the new SU website.

The new site will feature improved navigation and ease of use. Dumouchel also said it would be easier for staff to make content updates, making the site more timely. They are also planning to have a new calendar function and implement social media.

The old website is 10 years old and the new site will be in use for the next five to 10 years. While there were no timelines for the introduction of the new site, Turner said it would be weeks rather than months from launch.

EXECUTIVE REVIEW

The Executive Committee presented their midterm reports to Council, outlining their goals and what they thought their greatest accomplishments were and what goals needed more attention. All of the executives stressed that even though each executive has individual goals and portfolios, the work completed this year has been the result of teamwork.

Dehod stated that he hoped to make the midterm review an annual presentation in Council.

QUESTION PERIOD

Vice President (Academic) James

Eastham was asked about the Copyright Board of Canada’s interim ruling and how that is going to affect students. He said that the original Access Copyright suggestion that universities be charged \$45 per full time student was being put on hold and that the old fees of \$3.38 per student and 10 cents per copied page for coursepacks will remain in place. However, the restriction of reserve textbooks in libraries remains because this is based on a separate court decision.

Vice President (Student Life) Rory Tighe was asked about the possibility of offering UPass stickers at Campus St. Jean, which he said he would investigate.

Tighe was also asked about the decision to change the format of AntiFreeze this year, eliminating the evening events. He said by increasing team sizes to 10 and needing only three people per event, he hoped to get around needing an evening conference.

FALL READING WEEK

Council directed Bylaw Committee to draft a plebiscite question to be placed on the executive election ballot in March. Students will be asked if they support a Fall Reading Week with the following conditions: Classes start on the Wednesday before Labour Day, the Fall Reading Week would occur the same week as Remembrance Day, and that Fall Reading Week would only apply to the faculties and programs that also take off the Winter Reading Week.

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An open letter to SU political candidates

IT'S STARTED. POLITICAL WATCHERS ON CAMPUS are licking their chops and potential candidates are hurriedly preparing campaigns as the 2011 SU Executive Election approaches.

Current councillors, some SU staff, and even a dark horse or two will likely throw their names into the hat, vying for one of five executive positions at the Students' Union. While the candidates are going to get an avalanche of "advice" from friends, former SU hacks, and current politicians, some of it good and most of it horrible, I want to take the opportunity to address all the candidates before they get caught up in the hectic world of campaign politics and give them this recommendation: remember who you'll be working for.

Nomination packages for the executive elections became available last week, prompting an explosion of "coffee dates" and "informational meetings" between potential candidates and the people they think can give them an edge.

But through it all, I ask potential candidates and their teams of volunteers to remember that you're working for students, not your friends or a tiny voting block. You are the chosen representatives of 30,000 undergraduates who pass along their collective voice to you in order to better their experience here at the University of Alberta.

It might sound like overblown rhetoric, but it's the truth. Politicians sometimes lose sight of the fact that they're public servants above all else, given their jobs not by a benevolent boss or a pliant relative, but instead by the combined approval of their voting public.

It's this approval they should keep at the front of their minds when making decisions, doing so because it helps their constituents and not themselves. Candidates who are in it for themselves, because they want the power or they crave the attention, are doing it for the wrong reasons. These people are usually easy to spot, pushing their vision of the Students' Union and the university on anyone and everyone. Good candidates talk to students, listen to what they want, and take the time to seriously consider new information brought to them.

That's not to say there aren't side benefits to the job. The pay, which was recently increased for next year by council, is an obvious draw. For a student, making \$33,000 a year while still in school is a significant perk. The other benefits, from travel to networking, provide more reasons for people to apply.

And it's undeniable that having "SU President" or any of the other executive positions on your résumé can help open a number of doors in the future. Presidents have previously made their way into the big-kid political sphere, from former Alberta Premier Peter Lougheed to political activist Mike Hudema.

But don't let the game of politics cloud the reality of governance and trust. Working as an elected official at the Students' Union is about guiding a \$10 million organization dedicated to furthering the student experience on this campus. While the SU can do great things, it can also become an inconsequential sideshow when uninformed and self-important officials are in charge.

So as you, the potential candidate, start setting up your campaign and try to lock down support over the next few weeks, keep in mind who your actual boss will be. You don't owe your victory to the three hacks who gave you some bullshit advice, but rather to the student body as a whole.

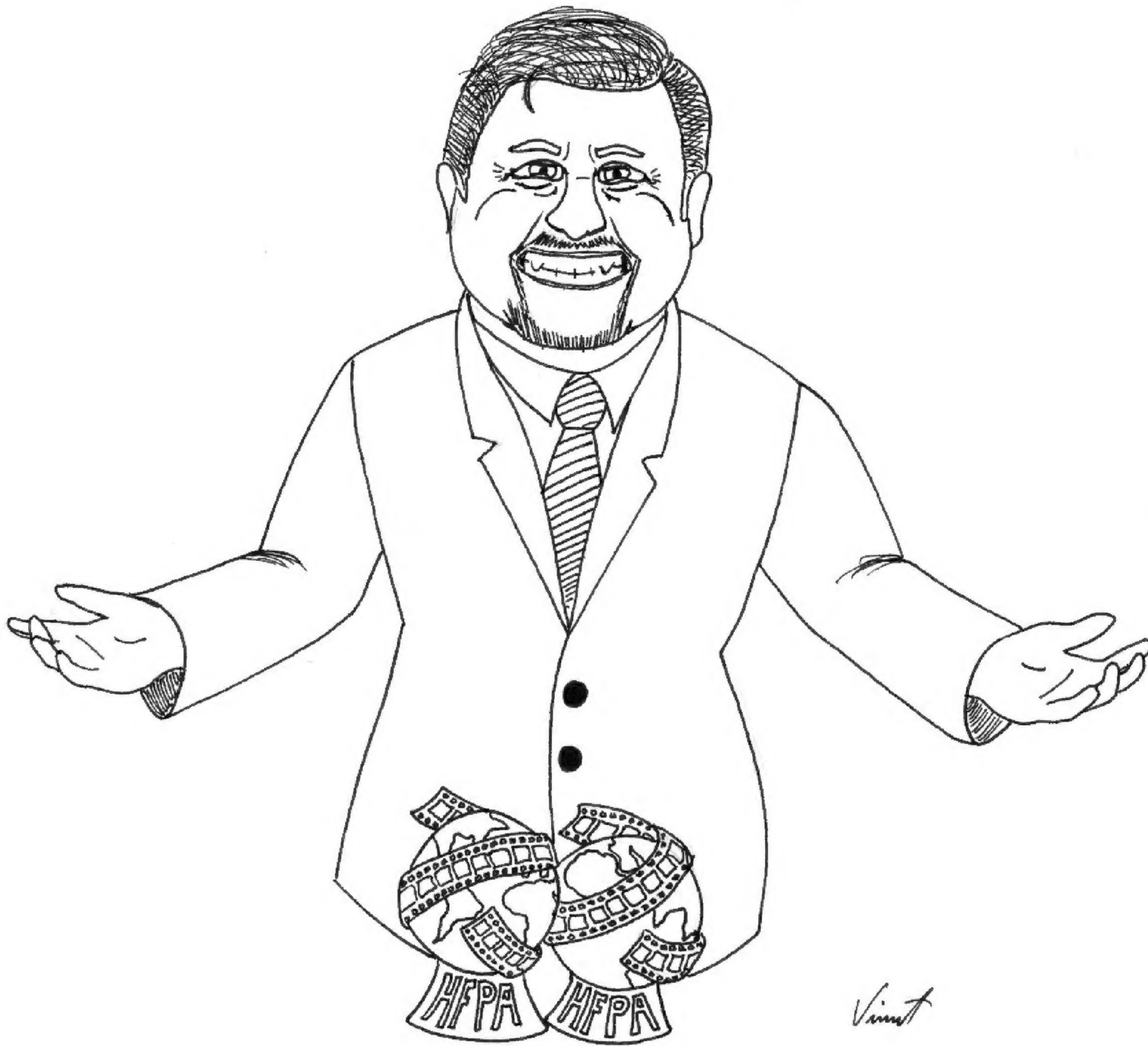
JUSTIN BELL
Managing Editor

Globes not worthy of awards

Gervais offends some
At Golden Globes. Remind me,
Why care? I forget.

ALIX KEMP
Doesn't Have Cable Anyways

TO MAKE SUCH SCATHING JOKES AT THE HFPA AWARDS, RICKY GERVAIS MUST HAVE SUBSTANTIAL GLOBES.



ROSS VINCENT

from THE web

Professor punished for defending students

RE: ("Math prof asked to resign after grade battle with department," Alexandria Eldridge, January 11)

Kudos to Kovalyov for doing the right thing. The irony is that classes with a higher-than-average GPA, rather than being indicative of a prof's incompetence, probably mean that the prof in question doing a better-than-average job in teaching his students the material. Profs like this should be rewarded, not punished. Odds are, however, that this isn't an isolated case. Let's just hope it's not as likely that other profs are more willing than Kovalyov to comply with their department's demands.

JONATHAN FAERBER
Via Internet

Instructors have responsibilities in grading

RE: ("Math prof asked to resign after grade battle with department," Alexandria Eldridge, January 11)

1. The midterm and assignments are good diagnostic tools to both the student and instructor on any teaching or learning problems with individual students and with the class as a whole. As an instructor, I think the responsibility is on the

instructor to let the student know after the midterm that he/she is not likely to pass the course and remind him/her about the deadline for withdrawing from the course. The failure grade leaves a permanent mark on the student's academic records, not to speak of the waste of tuition for the course.

I get excellent results from my warnings. I observe my classroom becoming fuller and more students coming during my office hours during which we together identify the problem — teaching or learning related. Happily, most students improve, and some students with barely passing grades in the midterm have scored 80 per cent and above in the final. I end up failing a very small proportion of the students (usually those who failed both the midterm and final exam).

Comparing my failure rate (6 per cent or less) with a failure rate of 30 per cent in another department sends out a disturbing message to the students. Certainly the disparity of grading practices need to be addressed at this university.

2. As the instructor, I am the best-positioned person to come up with the final grade for the student. If an administrator (not necessarily someone with the academic qualifications to teach that particular course) should arbitrarily lower or raise my grades without telling me, I'd interpret that action as deeply disrespectful and apply for a job somewhere else.

"ASTOUNDED"
Via Internet

Kovalyov did the right thing

RE: ("Math prof asked to resign after grade battle with department," Alexandria Eldridge, January 11)

The math department has a particularly interesting way of assigning grades. I have taken three math courses and I have found that they use the excuse of "historical averages" as a way to escape the constraints of a bell curve.

I understand that math is an area of study that to get an A+ you must have a really good understanding of the material such that a grade of 90 per cent or more is required. However, in the case of Mikhail Kovalyov, he made a decision based on all the final marks that he would set his average close to the required average and grade accordingly. Despite his 20 years of experience and expert discretion, this did not satisfy the department and this is unacceptable.

Kovalyov followed all the guidelines set out by the department. For a department based on logic and reasoning, I see none of that in their conclusion to "relieve" Kovalyov of his position. Kovalyov did undermine his department in his email to his students; however, he made the right decision to inform his students who otherwise would have accepted their lower grades with sad faces but would not have appealed them.

It was crucial for Kovalyov to deflect the blame away from him and towards the true decision-maker, in

this case the department, so the students could direct their concerns to the proper source.

This is not the first time I have heard of extremely low averages in math classes and I think it would be more constructive for the department to direct their efforts to help profs create exams and assignments that create a natural curve at the proper average rather than filing disciplinary action against profs whose average just so happened to be low only to be further lowered.

To Kovalyov, I hope your numerous years of teaching up until now have been rewarding and fulfilling.

"ANONYMOUS"
Via Internet

Math profs shouldn't be inflating grades

RE: ("Kovalyov case breaks trust in grading," Jonn Kmech, January 11)

Isn't giving people who got 35 per cent in a class a C- grade inflation? People seem to be missing the point — Kovalyov was boosting the grades to give out ridiculous marks that did not reflect the amount of knowledge the students possessed. The Math department pushed them back to what was more reasonable for the percentages. This is not grade deflation — this is being reasonable.

Should this be happening? No. But that's because profs should be giving marks based on percentages. Should too many people be getting

PLEASE SEE LETTERS • PAGE 8

The importance of assigning blame in the Giffords shooting



RYAN
BROMSGROVE

“We must stop recognizing extreme political rhetoric, not because it holds no argumentative merit and the spouters are either exploiting the public’s bloodthirst for financial gain or are just plain stupid, but because we’re obsessed with finding deeper meaning when there may be none.”

The shooting of Gabrielle Giffords, the Democratic congresswoman from Arizona, earlier this month was tragic. But enough about that — it’s time to exploit it to score cheap political points.

First off, let’s ignore Jared Lee Loughner, the man police arrested for shooting Giffords, killing six others, and wounding several more. We don’t have time to wait for him to talk, or for psychiatrists to try to understand what was going through his head and potentially diagnose him with a serious mental illness. We must strip him of the personal responsibility for the crime and focus instead on what other factors we can blame for this.

Let’s start with Sarah Palin. She had a graphic on her website with targets over the locations of various Democratic Members of Congress who were voting for the health care reform bill. Clearly, she should have been thinking of the possibility that someone might see that and be compelled to interpret it as a real call to arms.

Such a catastrophic failure in the thinking of the shooter was not the problem — Palin was. Glenn Beck also has a history of saying stupid things. So does Rush Limbaugh. So let’s blame both of them too.

Actually, come to think of it, let’s

just blame the whole political climate. Forget that the real problem with inflammatory rhetoric and calling people Hitler is that it prevents anybody from having any real discussions and, you know, getting shit done.

Forget that there have been assassination attempts throughout history in times of more gentlemanly disagreements — just go ahead and assume that the cause of the shooting is that U.S. politics is a war between red and blue. Then pretend to give a damn about it for a week or so until the drama dies down, so we can return to the same old shit-sliding because supporting a party is like supporting a sports team, and winning is everything.

While we’re at it, we should probably also blame gun culture, because nobody ever attempted murder before the NRA. There has to be some fairly recent movie we can also blame. Let’s say Harry Potter. With seven to choose from and an eighth coming, I’m sure *someone* can pull connections out of at least one of them. Run Voldemort’s dialogue backwards and put it through enough filters, and I guarantee you’ll find something that sounds at least vaguely like “do it, Jared!”

Look, it’s just too damn hard to deal with a reality where people do unpredictable things. It’s scary that at

any moment, for any reason, someone can ruin everything, and there isn’t really a lot we can do about that. To fix that problem after 9/11, we opened the curtains on what has been described as security theatre. We’ve installed costly and invasive security equipment and procedures at airports in an unending game of catch up with terrorists, but it doesn’t prevent terrorism. It makes it look like we can, and it sure does make us feel empowered. And that’s such a nice feeling, even if it’s completely empty. Sooner or later we’re going to want that same feeling regarding cases like Giffords’.

I suppose we’d also better watch what we say, take care not to make violent analogies, and of course, censoring books, movies, music, and commentators is essential.

Ultimately, we must stop recognizing extreme political rhetoric, not because it holds no argumentative merit and the spouters are either exploiting the public’s bloodthirst for financial gain or are just plain stupid, but because we’re obsessed with finding deeper meaning when there may be none.

It’s not enough that Loughner picked up a gun and squeezed the trigger. Like Mark David Chapman with Lennon, or John Hinckley Jr. with Reagan, someone or something must have made him do it.

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I've got Matchbox 20 stuck in my head and I am NOT ashamed of it.

Don't you dare look down on me when I saw I'm in phys ed and rec. I can name all the muscles in the body- can you? Didn't think so.

Ferris Bueller you're my hero. (For real)

Learn how to use "their," "they're," and "there," people. We're all old enough to know better! This is university, dammit!

Bitch at your pain-in-the-ass (ex)roommate in secret?" Indeed, fuck u mister liu

Lister & Scratchy money: its like regular money, but 'fun'...

Listen BioSci, I understand you need your hours of loud drilling and banging, but I need to hear my professor lecture...

Asian couple always glued together in second floor cameron: GET A ROOM.

I would like to have sex with Hermione Since I would be a wizard I could magic my semen to be rainbow coloured

gateway, the next time you don't publish my submission about someone sucking a dick, we're going to have to sit down for a serious chat.

this isn't where i parked my car.

if i was brad chury i would run a train on these broads.

Was soll ich Gutes lesen?

What did Batman say to Robin before he got into the car? Robin, get in the car.

People that get ready to leave class 10 minutes before class ends. Im gunna drop kick you in da face.

I really wish I had known people dyed their hair green for cancer research. I've been staring them down thinking they were Rider fans

Bring The Buried Life to U of EH!

Dear 2nd year design girl working at Glam Slam. I messed up and should've got your number, you're gorgeous. I hope you read this, could you ever forgive me?

Can someone please project a 3D model of the south campus expansion in my room for me? This palladium is killing me...

Hey Leah. Remember when I asked you out 2 years ago and you cold stood me up? That sucked. PS you're still really hot.

To the girl who told me to watch my mouth in the library. You're right. Sorry about that. You're still an asshole though.

If you're a member of the Gateway staff, I'm sorry if I look at you like I know you but we've never met. It's just that I recognize your face and your name. I'm not creepy!

Why was the last issue of the Gateway largely devoid of cussing? wtf...excuse me, that was inappropriate...I meant to say what the fuck?

Wouldn't it be awesome if, instead of raising SU executive salaries by \$7K, they just bought the execs on-campus meal plans?

Rolly chair races on second floor Cameron anyone?!

To the girls in (I believe) Women's Studies who posted "Smile- You're Beautiful" in the female engineering bathrooms... Thank you. It's not just 3rd floor in Cameron Library that could use a bit more STFU. How about more STFU in all the libraries.

Attention Listerites: Stand up for your Dodgeball Rights! Ban 8K from reffing!

Brad Chury: The only reason I don't write a complaint to the Gateway about just how ABSOLUTE SHIT Dick & Douche is is because of that thing you did with your tongue. You took me to new highs.

Dear gay bar and lazer tag. That is my life too. Lets meet!

If more than 1 in 4 of your students are failing on the curve, you should give them a refund and an apology for failing them abjectly as an instructor.

Dear girls down the hall, I don't care which class you have at 8 am, it's 630 in the morning and too bloody early to be yelling about it. STFU.

Tanner (oe), suck a bag of dicks. -sincerely yours, everyone

missed connection? or masturbatory aid for later? you be the judge.

Can someone pleeeeeease drop Comparative Lit 343, or Engl 208, 209 or 299? You know they're terrible classes. So terrible you should have me enroll in them instead of you.

Dear U of A, WHERE THE BLEEP ARE MY MARKS? It's been 3 weeks since I wrote my exams. Seriously, WTF???

Thanks so much to the guy who helped get my car unstuck from 75 Ave at -1pm on Sunday. Also, you're attractive & clearly nice, wish I could have stayed to catch your name or # :-)

The only problem with haiku is that you just get started and then

My boyfriend looks hot in Zellers lingerie

The Gateway reserves the right to edit any submissions, as well as refuse publication of any submission it deems racist, sexist, hateful, libellous, or overtly offensive. The Gateway cannot guarantee that your submission will be used (but we'll try). Submissions should be 130 characters max (including spaces).

LETTERS • CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

low marks, then the class needs to be analyzed. Was it a particularly poor batch of students? Was the teaching terrible? Is the course material too hard? Are the pre-reqs not high enough? Look at those and fix it. Don't just artificially inflate people's marks.

"FRUSTRATED GRAD STUDENT"
Via Internet

Common exams could solve U of A grading problems

RE: ("Kovalyov case breaks trust in grading," John Kmech, January 11)

I have to say, I was absolutely shocked when I found out the U of A does not have common exams for their courses. I have a Bachelor's degree from a university in Ontario, and at that university, all the students in a given course wrote the exact same exam at the same time and place. Thus, every single student in a given course (even the huge first-year classes in chemistry, biology, physics, economics, etc.) wrote the exact same exam as every other student taking the same class, regardless of which prof taught them.

Now, this did have certain consequences: the prof I had for organic chemistry was much, much better than the other profs teaching the course. So those students who had that time slot free, but who were registered in one of the other sections, would come to our class and sit in the aisles, just to learn from our prof.

I do think common exams are the way to go, however. Every student in a given course should write the same midterm and final exams. Then you don't have to worry about one prof writing much easier or much more difficult exams.

"ANOTHER GRAD STUDENT"
Via Internet

Difficulty of getting awards unfair to students with disabilities

RE: ("Letters," January 11)

I have to agree with Kristie Seright's letter to the editor on how students with disabilities get discriminated against for student awards. I too am a student on campus with disabilities. And I too have been discriminated based on my disability because it's not readily obvious like being wheelchair-bound or blind, etc.

There needs to be a review of the qualification criteria for student awards so it doesn't discriminate against students with disabilities when they take a reduced course load as a result of their disability.

Some students on campus with disabilities receive some funding to go to school but do need the extra financial assistance from student bursaries and awards to help pay for school. And to be told that you do not qualify because you have a disability is a slap in the face in my opinion and blatantly discriminatory.

It seems to me that the university SFA, awards office, and ALIS need to review their policies to bring them up to date with today's reality, and not be discriminatory based on disability. Most awards are based on GPA and/or financial need and not one's limitations.

"JOHN"
Via Internet

Letters to the editor should be sent to letters@gateway.ualberta.ca or delivered to SUB 3-04. The Gateway reserves the right to edit letters for length and clarity, and to refuse publication of any letter it deems racist, sexist, libellous, or otherwise hateful in nature.

Letters to the editor should be no longer than 400 words, and should include the author's name, program, and year of study.

Not everyone needs to edit Wikipedia



BRUCE
CINNAMON

Wikipedia, that online information monolith and go-to solution for all desperate students, celebrated its 10th anniversary this weekend. Founder Jimmy Wales declared that the website would seek to be more user-friendly in order to attract a new generation of web editors.

Apparently, most lay internet users are confused, or in Wales' words, "literally afraid," of the complicated code required to properly edit the site's 17 million articles. He therefore proposed that Wikipedia upgrade its editing system to provide "a ramp for new users," one that will attract a younger generation, and specifically more women and more people in the developing world, to contribute to the encyclopedia.

Admirable though the motive behind this change might be, it is nonetheless a terrible idea. Though the notion of including a broader, more diverse source of contributors is nice, the practical consequences of making Wikipedia a "free encyclopedia that [literally] anyone can edit" — rather than a free encyclopedia that only those who invest the time to learn the current techniques can edit, like it is now — would be utterly disastrous. We need only look at every other blog, message board, or collaborative website on the internet to know that

universal access to posting and editing makes for a whole lot of stupid.

There are many people who would contribute to the site without posting idiotic or hateful edits, much like they do now. But there are many more who would abuse such freedom. Considering that trolling is already a problem on the site, making the software even easier to navigate would only compound that issue, potentially tying up the site's administrators, who monitor and rectify irresponsible posts.

If our time with the internet has taught us anything, it's that anything that can be posted online, whether it be angry YouTube comments or loads and loads of porn, will inevitably be there in abundance.

Wikipedia's current editors, admirable cadre that they are, would soon be engaged solely in policing the site, cleaning up the mess of vandals rather than producing new content.

And not only internet trolls will take advantage of this change. It could allow a far more frightening group of highly opinionated "anyones" to inject political rhetoric into the site's articles more easily, manipulating and eliminating whatever information is incompatible with their particular philosophies.

Wikipedia's evil right-wing alternative Conservapedia alleges the former

site has a liberal bias, and bills itself as "the trustworthy encyclopedia." Contributors to the site frequently post hateful, illogical, and entirely false information in the name of upholding a more "objective" viewpoint. Now imagine that the Conservapedians have been given easier access to their rival's website. A descent into outraged edit-wars is inevitable.

All this may seem alarmist, but it is undeniably a plausible outcome to Wales' declaration for his web site's future. And if our time with the internet has taught us anything, it's that anything that can be posted online, whether it be angry YouTube comments or loads and loads of porn, will inevitably be there in abundance.

It is important that new contributors be brought in and novel perspectives are included. Yet this should not come at the expense of Wikipedia's amazing usefulness and, despite what your professors or annoying keener friends may say, general faithfulness to reality. If this change is inevitable, which it seems to be, then Wales and company will have to redouble their efforts to screen out the mean, the stupid, and the hateful. Otherwise, the web site's accuracy and usefulness could once again come into question, something they should try to avoid at all costs, considering that people have only recently begun to accept Wikipedia's legitimacy.

Otherwise, the unthinkable will happen, worse than the impeachment of Wikipedia's indispensable role in preserving and expanding human knowledge — none of us will ever again be able to get an A on that paper we wrote at 4 a.m. the night before, with our favourite little online encyclopedia's help on the sly.

STUDENTS' UNION TOWNHALL

FREE
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& POP

The Students' Union Executive is holding a Townhall meeting, and we want you to be there. Join us for pizza and pop in the Alumni Room in SUB, and get your voice heard. The Townhall will focus on:

- reviewing the Students' Union's **year to date**,
- getting your feedback on the **Strategic Plan**, and
- answering questions about **Executives' roles and goals**.

For more information, and for a copy of the Strategic Plan, please visit su.ualberta.ca/townhall

If you can't make it to the meeting but still want to give feedback we will be accepting comments up until **February 7th** at strategicplan@su.ualberta.ca.

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U.S. border control taking candy, surprises from Canadian children



ALI
CHURCHILL

“By hiding an inedible object inside an edible one, Kinder Surprises have the potential to overwhelm the minds of the children of America, fooling them into eating the toy as well as the chocolate egg. Maybe banning the sugary snack really is in the best interest of their citizens.”

They might have missed Christmas by a few weeks, but it seems that the American Food and Drug Administration has a pretty Grinch-like policy when it comes to a certain chocolate treat. This came as a surprise to Linda Bird of Manitoba, who was told at the Minnesota border she faced paying a \$300 fine for bringing dangerous contraband into the United States. The abhorrent item in question was none other than the seductive temptress that is a Kinder Surprise.

Bird's plan was to drive to Ontario in early December to visit family; she thoughtfully brought along the egg as a treat for her two daughters whom she planned to visit. Her brief trip through the United States was intended as a shortcut but took a much longer and definitely more ludicrous turn when, after a random vehicle search, she was informed of her violation.

Instead of serving as a delicious indulgence, the egg ended up as the property of the United States. Bird was let off with a warning, but a month later, she received a seven-page letter from the US Customs and Border Protection Agency.

Government institutions are known for droning rhetoric, but managing to stretch the fate of a lowly chocolate egg into seven whole pages is fairly impressive.

Hidden amongst the cornucopia of long-winded government jargon came the surprising gist of the letter. The United States government courteously asked for Bird's permission to destroy the confiscated treat. Not so courteously, they also informed her that should she contest their right to the candy, she could pay a \$250 storage fee while she haggled over the egg's release. At least we now know how the United States plans to tackle their deficit.

Although this insanity might sound like the latest in increased border security measures, the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act, which prohibits embedding non-food items in edible treats, was passed way back in 1938. Think of the children — however will they be able to tell the two apart? Oh right, because the Kinder “surprise” is yellow and plastic, while the outer shell is chocolate. That was deceptively easy. By hiding an inedible object inside an edible one, Kinder Surprises have the potential to

overwhelm the minds of the children of America, fooling them into eating the toy as well as the chocolate egg.

Maybe banning the sugary snack really is in the best interest of their citizens, if only because in the face of an increasingly overweight nation, it removes another unhealthy snack from the hands of the American public. Then again, an extra hundred calories and a possible choking hazard probably won't do much to improve the overall safety of the American people when you can buy a gun from the average Walmart.

In the end, Bird declined to pay the \$250 fee on the chocolate that costs on average two bucks, and opted to allow the U.S. to destroy the chocolate treat. Thus ends this particular chocolate egg's story ... or so we think. But here's a theory for you: the U.S. border patrol claims to have confiscated 25,000 Kinder Surprise eggs. Imagine the amount of money some clever border patrol agent could make by setting up an underground smuggling ring, selling stale Kinder Surprises to the deprived people of the United States at inflated prices.

American border patrol: it's like taking candy from a baby.

Zodiac changes not what they seem

Introduction of a new astrological sign causes confusion among masses



ALANA
WILLERTON

classic pick-up line, “What's your sign?” will now be met with a glazed-over expression as we try to remember which sign we actually are.

Of course, how much we should really be buying into horoscopes in the first place has always been debatable. As a Libra, I am supposedly impatient when corrected and enjoy the arts more than the sciences.

Some women [...] discovered they weren't actually the strong, proud lion of Leo, but rather a squat crab named Cancer. And let's face it: no girl wants to identify with anything related to crabs.

While these traits are actually quite accurate of my personality, being a Libra also apparently means I have a weakness for liquor and sport a ‘trade-mark’ dimple. Needless to say, the completely false nature of the latter traits proves that these kinds of things aren't quite as accurate as some would have us believe.

Accompanying the arrival of Ophiuchus last week was a sense of dismay or confusion from just about everyone who heard the news. Everywhere you looked, the idea of being told we were not who we thought we were seemed unfathomable. And you know what, I get

it. We've come to identify with our sign, whether we realize it or not. Even if you're not someone who puts much stock in horoscopes, most of us have at least a superficial knowledge of which zodiac sign we happen to fall under. No matter what we think about astrology, we identify with our signs, if for no other reason than we always have.

I myself was a Libra last week, and look at me now: a Virgo. Now, as great as I'm sure being a Virgo would be, I have no intention of letting some snake-wielding guy named Ophiuchus tell me that I am no longer a Libra. It's just not going to happen, no matter what any astrologists say.

My stubborn refusal to surrender my sign stems not only from another of my apparently very Libra-esque personality traits, but also from one other little fact: we can have it both ways.

As it turns out, there are actually two zodiacs, the tropical zodiac and the sidereal zodiac. The tropical zodiac is the one that some of us Westerners adhere to, and since it is fixed on the seasons rather than the constellations, our astrology signs are essentially untouched by the revelation of the latest zodiac constellation.

That's right, you heard me correctly. All of the craziness surrounding the changing of our astrological signs was just that: craziness.

So to all you people who have been living your lives according to a daily horoscope and attributing your personality traits to those of a fish, a set of twins, or a scorpion, you have not been in the wrong all these years. Of course, I'm sure that thanks to your horoscope, you knew that already.

Identity crises reached a new-found height last week as news of a new 13th zodiac constellation sparked outrage from people everywhere forced to reconcile themselves with a change in their astrological sign.

The new constellation, a serpent holder called Ophiuchus, was introduced after an astronomer pointed out in a Minnesota newspaper that a “wobble” in the rotation of the Earth caused the zodiac signs to be different than when they were initially conceived 2,000 years ago, causing people to question their personalities.

Men shuddered as they found themselves no longer the tough, manly bulls they once were as a Taurus, reduced to the cuddly ram Aries. Some women, on the other hand, discovered they weren't actually the strong, proud lion of Leo, but rather a squat crab named Cancer. And let's face it: no girl wants to identify with anything related to crabs.

As your sign changed, that strategically placed tattoo of a scorpion you got on your lower back after having one too many drinks? Not such a great idea now that the scale of a Libra should be dangling from its claw.

The changes to the zodiac have also affected the way we go through our everyday lives. What was once a

used textbooks and much more...

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DAN MCKECHNIE

Harmer puts down the pick and picks up a stick

musicpreview

Sarah Harmer

With Gentleman Reg
January 19 and January 20 at 7 p.m.
Wednesday show sold out
The Starlite Room (10030-102 Street)
Thursday Tickets \$35.25 at ticketmaster.ca

MADELINE SMITH
Arts & Entertainment Editor

After more than two decades in the Canadian music scene, Sarah Harmer knows what she's doing. Over the phone from her parents' house in Burlington, Ont., the acclaimed singer-songwriter sounds perfectly at ease, despite several grueling hours of non-stop interviews. Listening to her thoughtful responses and genuine sense of humour, it's easy to see why she's been so successful.

Harmer's music career is long and varied,

joining her first band as a teenager and moving on to front the folk-rock group The Weeping Tile through the '90s. Now over a decade into her solo career, she decided to take some time off from recording in order to focus on her activism efforts, publicly battling proposed plans to disturb the wilderness of the Niagara Escarpment for a gravel development. But like most of her work, Harmer is nonchalant about her achievements.

"I'm just a citizen," Harmer says modestly. "I'm busy doing stuff that needs to be done, in my opinion. Sometimes the term 'activist' can be used really dismissively. It's hard when you just put one blanket word on a lot of different activities."

Harmer's passion for the environment is reflected in her personal life as well — she grew up on a farm and still makes her home in rural Ontario — but very rarely in her music career. Aside from "Escarpment Blues," her ode to environmental preservation, Harmer admits she hasn't found a way to marry the roles of activist

and musician quite yet.

"Sometimes I think I really want to be a broader artist with the sentiment that I touch on, you know?" Harmer reflects. "I typically just go into cliché stuff — fall back into the same territory. So I think maybe I should set my mind to the project of making a set of songs based around [an environmental] theme or that kind of information, but I haven't done that yet. I like that idea."

Despite her feelings that her music wanders into the same emotional subject matter a little too frequently, Harmer is not one to shy away from experimentation. During the time she spent away from recording between releasing 2005's *I'm a Mountain* and her 2010 album *Oh Little Fire*, she started playing gigs with another band, but this time, as the drummer.

"My drumming is pretty choppy," she laughs. "I can't really play any interesting fills — kind of just hip-hop beats and pretty straight-up basics."

"I felt this responsibility to hold the song together," she continues, describing the differences between being in front of the microphone

and behind the kit. "But it was with friends of mine; it wasn't like I auditioned for the gig — we were just getting together to hang out anyways. [...] But I'd always feel like, 'If you guys want to get a real drummer, it's cool!'"

As she finally sets the drumsticks down and picks up her guitar again, Harmer is eager to give her latest album the tour it deserves.

"It's tricky," she explains, "Because there are really great benefits to playing in theatres, having really nice monitors, and having things sound really good, but I kind of felt like this record wanted to be played where people could stand up and drink beer. And so that's why we're coming through town and playing more casual venues."

Harmer may have strong ties to the calm of nature, but she still understands the power of turning up the amplifiers and letting the audience loose on the dance floor.

"It's a little bit more like a scrappy bar tour, in a way. I'm excited to bring that sense of energy to the show and to have that close connection with the crowd."

One-woman production showcases dark tale of self-discovery

theatrepreview

TUMIT

Directed by Kate Weiss
Written and performed by
Reneltta Arluk
January 19 and 20 at 7 p.m.; January
22 at 4:30 p.m.
Stanley A. Milner Library Theatre
(7 Sir Winston Churchill Square)
Tickets \$20, \$18 for Students/
Seniors, festival passes available

KEVIN LEE PINKOSKI
Arts & Entertainment Staff

Reneltta Arluk is, first and foremost, a storyteller — it's just a coincidence that she is also trained as an actress and a performer.

A 2005 graduate of the U of A's BFA Acting program, Arluk will be back in Edmonton this week to perform *TUMIT*, a one-woman show she's been developing for five years. *TUMIT* is only one of several works featured at the fourth annual Canoe Theatre Festival, an event that boasts a line-up of "theatre that rocks the boat."

However, Arluk insists her work's significance lies in its everyday qualities.

"*TUMIT* fits into the festival because of its simplicity," she explains. "It exists in a reality that could belong to anyone."

TUMIT, meaning "tracks" in Inuktitut, explores the life of Sarah, a soon-to-be single mother evaluating both the path she has taken as

well as the one that lies ahead. The play follows Sarah as she prepares to move out of the apartment she once shared with her husband, determined to find a new direction for her life. Combining both traditional and contemporary storytelling, the performance centers around Sarah's examination of the consequences of raising a child while still trying to improve her own situation.

However, this isn't your typical coming-of-age story — the play deals with some challenging and uncomfortable subject matter, but still manages to make it relatable.

"The show definitely finds dark places that I believe exist within everyone, through situations everyone is familiar with," Arluk explains.

Inspired by a combination of

both her everyday surroundings and her experiences living in northern Canada, *TUMIT* is a product of the landscape of Arluk's life.

"When I first started writing *TUMIT*, I just wrote down short events that surrounded me. But eventually, they evolved; the events no longer just revolved around me, but my entire world," Arluk notes. "Suddenly, I had this character that was nothing like me, but seemed to reflect so many people around me."

Originally born in Fort Smith, NWT, Arluk is part Cree and part Inuvialuit. Her heritage seems to have left a lasting impression on her work, but she believes that there is a lot more to this story than just that.

"A lot of people ask me, 'Is this an Aboriginal story? Is this an Inuit or

Northern Canadian story?' Of course it has these elements, because I grew up in these environments, but I think there is definitely something more than that," she reveals.

In fact, Arluk is certain that the tale could belong to anyone.

"This story does not exist on stereotypes. It is just a perspective on a crossroads that anyone could come upon," Arluk explains. "It's not about it being an Aboriginal, Inuit, or Northern story. It's about it being a true story."

The truth in *TUMIT* is also exactly why Arluk is so excited to perform the piece.

"Although the topics and themes are so real, the environment is so magical. This makes Sarah's world so interesting to watch."



albumreview

Bedouin Soundclash

Light the Horizon
Pirates Blend Records

DUSTIN BLUMHAGEN
Arts & Entertainment Staff

Canada's cold climate has never been a friendly breeding ground for sunny reggae sounds. Sure, Michael Franti always acknowledges that he lived in Edmonton in the past, but he later chose San Francisco as his permanent home. The closest thing we have ever had to Bob Marley is Snow, which is terribly embarrassing to say the least.

On that note, praise Jah for Bedouin Soundclash! On their fourth full-length, the group brings the sunshine to the frozen north with their reggae beats and ska rhythms. This time around, they're also taking advantage of the newfound freedom to experiment on their own label, Pirates Blend Records.

While race should never have anything to do with music, listeners are about as likely to mistake Jay Malinowski for a transplanted Jamaican as they would be to assume Eminem grew up in Compton. This is a sticking point that really helps

the band stand out from their peers in a genre that often gets stuck in cycles of repetition.

Hints of Malinowski's sombre solo effort *Bright Lights and Bruises* creep into the new Soundclash album, slowing things down considerably for tracks like "Fools Tattoo."

The band blends spaghetti western sounds with calypso beats to create a truly well-rounded and poppy world music sound. The standout track and lead single "Mountain Top" sounds like a Clash B-side, a comparison that any band should be proud of.

Bedouin Soundclash's experimentation is still obviously hesitant, like a West Coast surfer dipping their toes in the ocean early on a winter morning, but if it signals the direction that they're headed, I'm happy to continue listening.

This album is the perfect soundtrack for making another miserable Alberta winter bearable.



albumreview

Sara Bareilles

Kaleidoscope Heart
Epic

TYLER HEIN
Arts & Entertainment Writer

Following up on her 2007 offering *Little Voice*, Sara Bareilles' latest album *Kaleidoscope Heart* is a clear attempt to solidify her status as a contemporary pop sensation. Instead, it further solidifies her as just another semi-talented female songstress with a piano struggling to rise above her essentially identical peers.

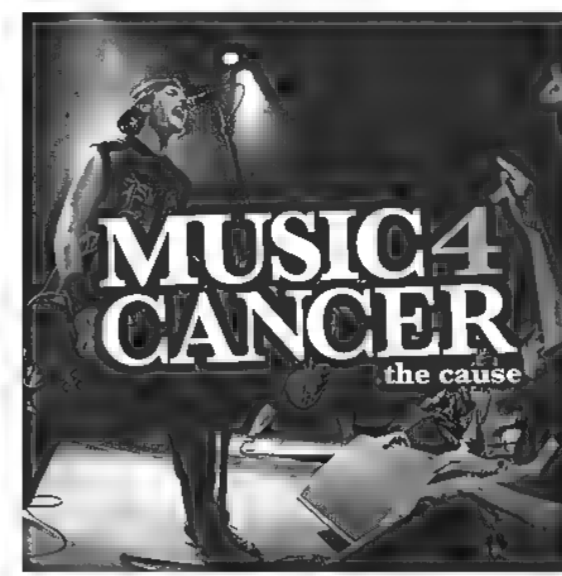
That's not to say that there aren't some catchy tunes on her latest offering. "Uncharted" and "King of Anything" are both jaunty, upbeat pop songs with just the right amount of glossy production (provided by such pedigree as Pharrell Williams and Questlove) to blend nicely with Bareilles' strong vocal talents and underutilized lyrical flair. However, she unfortunately balances out the album by including such sub-par offerings as "Let the Rain" and "Basket Case," tracks that sound too much like a desperate attempt to prove that she's capable of writing a

powerful ballad.

Both tracks come across sounding bland and uninspired — a far cry from the heartbreaking confessional they were meant to be. The album constantly hovers between sentimentalism and appealing, catchy pop, creating a frequently startling contrast. Bareilles hits the album's peak on the irresistibly infectious "Gonna Get Over You" — by far the album's standout track.

When at her best, Bareilles is among the greatest at what she does. She deserves to stand alongside her more popular contemporaries. *Kaleidoscope Heart* aims for the emotional heights of Alicia Keys, but the album makes Bareilles a likelier contender for the next Vanessa Carlton — just another singer-songwriter, remembered for just one or two catchy songs.

Bareilles won't write you a love song if you ask for one, but she'll write you a mediocre album without anyone asking.



albumreview

Music 4 Cancer

The Cause
Independent

DUSTIN BLUMHAGEN
Arts & Entertainment Staff

Musician Jay Epinat's mother battled and eventually succumbed to cancer. The punk rocker then took it upon himself to do something to raise awareness about the disease and created a double album — a whopping 47 songs — with contributions from various punk and ska bands from around the world. Proceeds from the release go to the Canadian Cancer Society.

The first disc features acoustic songs from up and comers like Sarah Blackwood and The Riot alongside punk legends Less Than Jake and Tony Sly of the band No Use for a Name.

Death By Stereo contributes a heartbreaking track "Forever and A Day," which effectively communicates the devastation of cancer on the life of a loved one.

Pop punk band Rufio follow that up with an optimistic track, stressing that things can only get better.

As well, the second disc

contains a number of dark acoustic tracks, suited to the sombre subject matter.

Even eternal clown Fat Mike bared his soul with NOFX's "My Orphan Year," an ode to his deceased parents, which is painfully awkward, but still effective.

The punk side of the album contains plenty of serious material, but the upbeat sounds make it feel less depressing. Local pop punks The Old Wives have their song "Bitchin'" alongside old school punks Swingin' Utters and Good Riddance. The songs are all great, with a few rare gems tossed into the mix for hardcore fans.

My favourite song (and title) comes from ska punks We Are the Union whose "5 Out of 5 Kids Who Kill Listen to Slayer" proves that they belong on the album right alongside the heavyweights.

With a small price tag and a big cause, this album is an easy sell.

"There are 10 kinds of people in the world: those who understand binary, and those who don't." Get in on the joke. Check out **Technical Difficulties**. Wednesdays at thegatewayonline.ca.

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Bewildering comedy an unappetizing film experience

The Dilemma’s far-fetched plot, uneven acting, and poor sense of humour make for a movie with major problems

filmreview

The Dilemma

Directed by Ron Howard
Starring Kevin James, Vince Vaughn, Winona Ryder, Channing Tatum, and Jennifer Connelly
Now Playing

JOEL RACKEL
Arts & Entertainment Staff

Watching *The Dilemma* is like eating a bowl of soup with your favourite ingredients mixed amongst your least — every time you get to something you like, you have to struggle through stuff you don’t. It is a film mixed up in drama and comedy, poorly dancing between the two, and doing each at times both decently and horribly.

The dilemma that supplies the title

— which could technically be the name of any movie ever — comes about when Ronny (Vince Vaughn) catches Geneva (Winona Ryder) cheating on her husband Nick (Kevin James), who is Ronny’s best friend since college as well as his business partner. Ronny sees this and thinks, “Oh man, should I tell Nick?”

Well, yes, obviously. But then that wouldn’t be a movie. So, to try and make something that isn’t really a dilemma into one, the film presents a series of obstacles complicating Ronny’s decision. First, Ronny and Nick are trying to close a big deal, and if Nick finds out his wife is cheating, it might jeopardize their engine business. Second, Nick already has a stress-induced ulcer — shocking, considering his healthy physique — and this unfortunate revelation could further injure

him. And finally, Nick and Geneva’s relationship may actually be more complex than previously thought. You can tell this because of subtleties like when Ronny approaches Geneva and says, “Your status says married!” but Geneva responds, “Actually, it’s complicated.” Apparently, chubby Kevin James won’t have sex with Winona Ryder anymore — one of the most implausible premises in recent memory — which is why she turns to banging Zip (Channing Tatum). The film’s entire plot is questionable at best, and Ronny’s reluctance to end the whole mess is just one example of its general irrationality.

But people acting utterly rational is hard to make funny, so comedy storylines are commonly vehicles to hang jokes on, and if it’s funny, it doesn’t matter that the plot is weak. The problem in *The Dilemma* is that laughs

can’t carry it either.

Much rests on the gargantuan shoulders of Vince Vaughn, who continues to play the same character he’s portrayed since *Old School*. Despite Vaughn’s schtick wearing out over the years, his improvisational and ranting style of acting is still the best and funniest part of the film. Unfortunately, this is no magnificent feat, considering the weak comedic co-stars. Kevin James contributes with a few funny faces and noises. Queen Latifah, playing a business client, is absolutely unbearable, and Tatum’s character is weird and inconsistent. He cries, fights Ronny, helps him, and then screws him over again.

Tatum’s character represents the film as a whole: it doesn’t know whether to cry, fight, or laugh. The film has moments of laughter and sincerity, but they are fleeting and

elusive. In addition to the main wacky adultery plot, there is a more dramatic strain about Ronny’s gambling addiction and struggling to commit to his girlfriend Beth (Jennifer Connelly), further adding to the film’s general sense of confusion.

The Dilemma is at times a bro-mance, a slapstick adventure, a study of dying relationships, a film about mistakes, and a prejudiced workplace comedy. Director Ron Howard, the man who brought us such films as *Splash*, *A Beautiful Mind*, *The Da Vinci Code*, and *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*, somehow makes his latest offering a mash-up of all those sensibilities: it tries to steer itself between the dramatic and the comedic, but ends up crashing into both.

In the end, even though *The Dilemma* might have some likable ingredients, it leaves a pretty bad aftertaste.

CULTURA OBSCURA

Four Loko



JUSTIN BELL
Managing Editor

Have you ever been so drunk you tried to casually move a stool but ended up tossing it across the room? If you haven’t, then you obviously never experienced the crazy antics that can happen after downing two cans of the most disgusting alcoholic beverage ever to hit the market: Four Loko.

The now-legendary beverage, clocking in at an impressive 12 per cent alcohol by volume, is a mix of malt liquor and energy drink, combining caffeine, taurine, and booze. Packaged in a 23.5-ounce can and sold for \$2 a pop in some American liquor stores, the drink is, for lack of a better term, a clusterfuck of bad ideas.

We were recently able to get our hands on some of this assault on the senses in liquid form and managed to suppress the instinct to wretch long enough to down half a can, which hints at the disaster to come. The taste can only be described as a mixture between a used condom and Satan’s asshole.

Apparently, continued consumption surprisingly makes the tinny taste start to decrease to the point that by the end of the first can, it no longer makes your tongue bleed. By that time, the overpowering sensation of Novocaine kicks in, and concerns over the effects on your kidneys start to become serious considerations.

Four Loko is also incredibly potent. As an experienced drinker, it normally takes me at least two to three beers to get a decent buzz going.

But after just a few drops of Four Loko, my eyes were twitching and it became difficult to remain standing.

The key, we’re told by Loko experts, is to drink it quickly and ignore the gagging reflex that kicks in. This will help you get just enough into your body to throw you into a violent rage.

After about half a can, our brave taste-tester was moving around the room attempting to kick the walls in for no apparent reason. Even a hapless bystander, spurred on with the phrase “take just a sip, you fat prat” was buzzing after a single dose.

We’ve heard rumours that consuming entire cans can induce blindness and the desire to watch the WWE for hours on end. It may also increase your criminal record by 20 per cent.

Thankfully, this cheap and disgusting drink is currently unavailable for purchase anywhere. Officials in the United States started investigating the manufacturers, who promptly agreed to change their formula to remove the caffeine, guarana, and taurine from the product. It’s also not available in Canada, likely because the mixture of energy drink and booze would have qualified it as some form of toxic waste in this country.

But aficionados still have cans hidden away in closets and stored in basement fridges, ready to pull them out when simply getting drunk is not good enough.

For these people, they need to take it to the next level: one just below that of an escaped convict.

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If you can’t make it to the meeting but still want to give feedback we will be accepting comments up until **February 7th** at strategicplan@su.ualberta.ca.



Rogen's *Hornet* a big-screen flop

filmreview

The Green Hornet

Directed by Michel Gondry
Starring Seth Rogen, Jay Chou, Cameron Diaz, and Christoph Waltz
Now Playing

LUCAS WAGNER
Gateway Green-Capped Hornet

Over the past decade, the superhero movie genre has experienced a rebirth of sorts. For better or worse, comic book franchises like *Iron Man*, *Spider-Man*, and a rebooted *Batman* franchise have been launched onto the silver screen, usually to critical acclaim and record-breaking revenues. Unfortunately, not all superheroes have the super-strength to succeed at the box office, and *The Green Hornet* is the latest of these masked misfits.

A re-imagining of the 1930s radio drama of the same name, *The Green Hornet* tells the story of Britt Reid (Seth Rogen), the spoiled son of a newspaper magnate. In a strikingly cliché fashion, his father is killed off to provide a catalyst for Reid's ascent to superheroism, but it's an ineffectual plot-driver as he spends several more minutes on screen moping around waiting for something to happen.

Eventually we get around to meeting the film's other main characters, including Reid's kung-fu valet and eventual sidekick Kato (Jay Chou), crime lord

Chudnofsky (Christoph Waltz), and Reid's love interest Lenore (Cameron Diaz). After running out of prologue, Reid finally creates his alter-ego of The Green Hornet, and takes to the streets of Los Angeles, disguised as a criminal himself, to fight the bad guys the only way Reid — and, in a sense, Rogen — knows how: blowing shit up and hoping for the best. The film drifts along, with the Hornet taking on criminal after criminal, meandering around in some semblance of a plot.

This is, I suppose, my main issue with *The Green Hornet*: like Reid himself, there's so much wasted potential, which makes the entire production look lazy. Rogen, who co-wrote the film's screenplay, takes his leading role to a level more suited to a YouTube short than a feature-length film. Director Michel Gondry had me excited to watch the movie, but he seems to have applied more techniques from his box-office flop *Be Kind Rewind* than his other, more critically acclaimed films.

Visually, *Hornet* is also unimpressive, which is especially disappointing; when a movie charges extra for 3D, it had damn well better use that extra dimension to good purpose, instead of saving it for a few choice special effects.

The Green Hornet isn't particularly bad, but it isn't particularly great either, and mediocrity is a death knell in the bombastic world of superhero films. With a hackneyed plot, lacklustre acting, and eye-grating 3D, it isn't nearly worth the price of admission. But months from now, when you're alone at home, bowl of microwave popcorn in hand, desperately browsing through Netflix — then, *The Green Hornet* shall rise again.

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CHROME O

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DRAGONETTE

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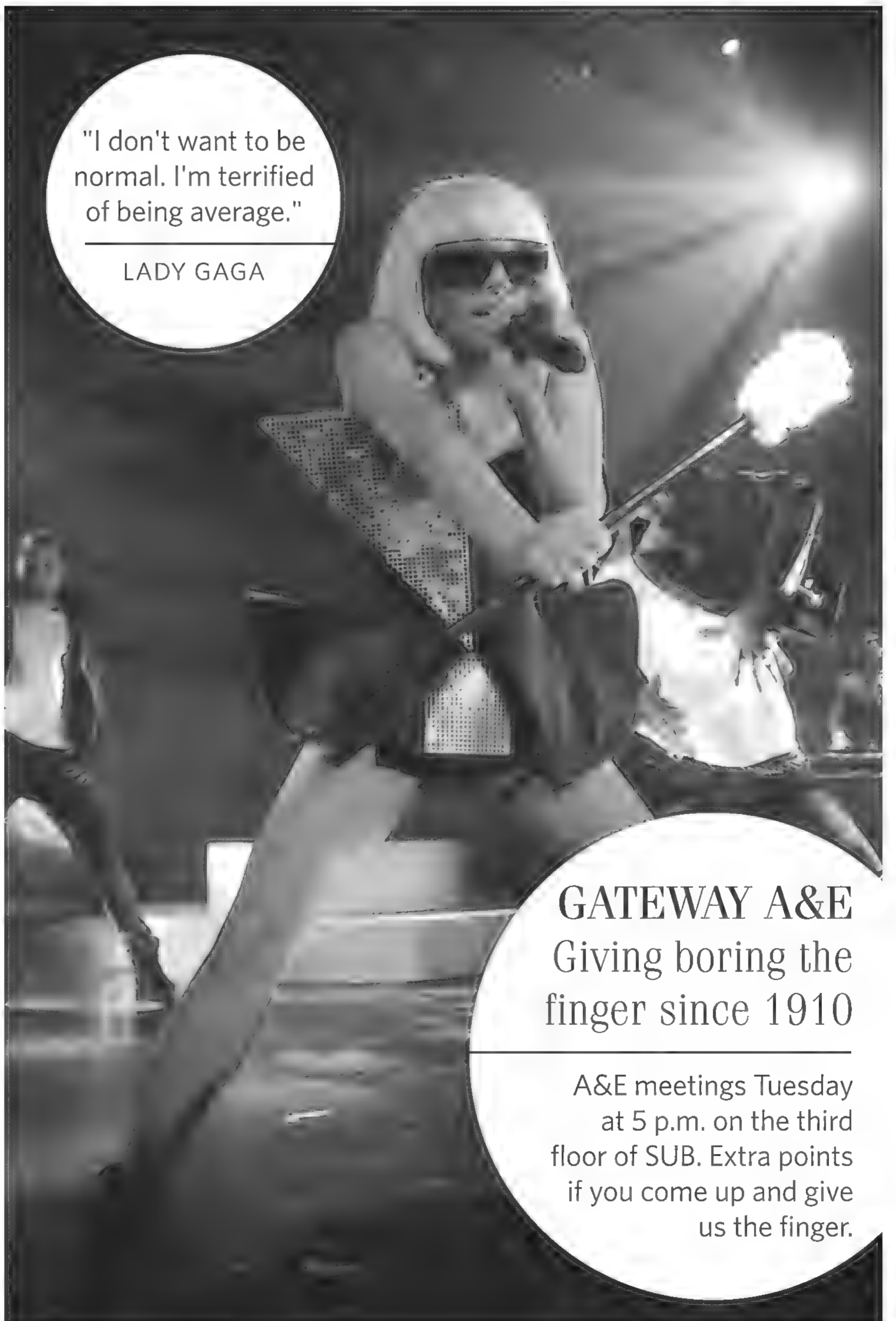
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"I don't want to be normal. I'm terrified of being average."

LADY GAGA



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Passionate Pandas dig out fifth straight win



BRAD MULLEN

Led by the dynamic combination of Proudfoot and Ellis, the Pandas have developed a resolute demeanour with their eye on the championship

volleyball roundup

Pandas vs. Regina Cougars

MATT HIRJI
Sports Editor

After faltering out of the gate at the beginning of the season with an unimpressive 1-3 record, the Pandas volleyball team opened their 2011 campaign on a high note with a two-game thrashing of the feisty Regina Cougars.

that [set] go. Our resilience and our fight kicked in. At the technical timeout I said to our team, "That was the most bizarre first 14 points ever," Eisler said.

"Regina is a good team that is actually harder to play against when they're down. They really like playing the underdog. Last weekend was never easy even though the score may have looked that way."

The Pandas will hope to extend their winning streak during two straight weekends in Winnipeg, first taking on the Manitoba Bisons, then following it up with a weekend series against the Winnipeg Wesmen. It's a

"Desire is a big part of what we do here. I did think at one time that everybody wants [a national championship]. I'm not sure if that's true anymore. We want it more, we are driven and we are willing to put ourselves on the line for."

LAURIE EISLER
HEAD COACH, PANDAS VOLLEYBALL

The sweep adds another positive point to the Green and Gold's phenomenal play as of late. The Pandas have won their last five regular season games in 15 straight sets over their Canada West rivals. But, as head coach Laurie Eisler asserts, the team still has plenty to work on if they hope to achieve their ultimate goal of bringing a national championship banner back to Edmonton in March.

"This weekend we played poorly, well. Over the entire weekend, our service and passing was really inconsistent, but we found a way to not let that affect our confidence and poise," Eisler explained.

"I thought that we handled the challenges both that we presented ourselves and that Regina presented really well. We are starting to develop on another level. When you can put the whole package together, that's a really positive sign."

The match-up quickly developed into a battle of wills when the veteran Cougars squad put forth a determined effort.

With each set that the Green and Gold won, the Regina Cougars became more resilient and desperate to hold onto their pride.

In what proved to be the final set of the weekend, for example, the Cougars exploded offensively, coming out of the gate with a 7-0 lead. While an earlier incarnation of this year's Pandas this year may have conceded a set to their opponent, the Green and Gold were able to pry their way back into the game, winning the next seven points and eventually closing out the set 25-19.

"That [final set] was sort of half us not doing things that well on our side, but it was also them just doing some brilliant things on their side of the net. It would have been easy to let

two-week challenge that Eisler and her young Pandas will hope to take in stride, develop, and grow from as they move into the Canada West playoffs in late February.

With the odds stacked against them in the competitive Canada West division that features seven teams ranked in the national top 10, the Pandas refuse to have their confidence shaken, standing firmly on the belief that they aspire to a national championship more than any other team in the nation.

"Desire is a big part of what we do here. I did think at one time that everybody wants [a national championship.] I'm not sure if that's true anymore. We want it more, we are driven we want it more and we are willing to put ourselves on the line for," Eisler passionately explained.

"Sometimes it's throwing the challenge out to your opponent, saying 'Okay, you may have beat us five times this season, but let's see if you can do it again.' It's like the Jets going in to play the Patriots last weekend. They got smoked in the regular season, but they didn't count themselves out, they wanted one more chance. We want one more chance."

15

consecutive winning sets

18

combined kills for Proudfoot and Ellis this weekend

67

winning percentage



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Bears inch closer to historic feat

volleyball roundup

Bears vs. Regina Cougars

JUSTIN BELL
Managing Editor

A number is just a number to Bears Volleyball head coach Terry Danyluk, but it's hard to deny the impressive nature of the team's 399 all-time conference victories.

Last weekend's two wins over the University of Regina Cougars pushed the Golden Bears one victory away from a landmark 400 all-time regular season wins. For Danyluk, it speaks more to the program overall than this year's team.

"Obviously, it's the history of the program, goes back a long ways," said Danyluk. "It's another step in the history of what has become a good sports program."

But the number doesn't mean anything this season for a squad looking to make the playoffs. The team's an impressive 9-1 for the season, with their only regular season loss coming to the Trinity Western University in mid-November. But they're still only third in the Canada West division.

The pair of victories in the main gym last weekend were another step towards qualifying for the playoffs, getting back into the swing of conference play after a long break and some heart-wrenching exhibition losses to some NCAA schools in California.

"It was a long break," said Danyluk. "It's good to get back and get some routine back in our system."

Returning to the lineup last weekend to help out were Mitch Irvine and captain Spencer Leiske, two veteran players who've been out with injuries since November. Leiske made an immediate impact, with 20 kills over the weekend to lead his to a series sweep against the Cougars.

Danyluk said the team had to move players around due to the injuries and compete well without them, but having the power and experience back in the lineup has been valuable for the Green and Gold.

"Regina was a scrappy team to play



AMIRALISHARIFI

against. I think having those two guys back was good for them and good for the team."

But now with the Cougars out of the way, and two wins in their cap to start the second half of the regular season, the Golden Bears will have to turn towards the coming slog that will define the winter term.

They travel to Winnipeg this weekend to take on the University of Manitoba Bisons, a team that has lost only one game all season, a close affair with Thompson Rivers back in early November. The Bisons also play well at home, with an undefeated record in their home gym.

Even more difficult could be the University of Calgary Dinos, who are

currently undefeated in the regular season. The Bears managed two victories over their southern rivals in the pre-season, but could be facing a streaking team in their final weekend of conference play.

"For us, it's a big focus to continue to improve," Danyluk said. "I think all the teams at the top can beat each other. Can we beat them? Yes. We have to make sure we're good enough to beat anybody we play."

It's going to come down to the team's consistency and efficiency, according to Danyluk. If they can keep their game going at top speed and through the next few weeks, they can position themselves for a deep run into the post-season.



AQUIB SHIRAZI

THE BOURKE SUPREMACY Pandas forward Karla Bourke navigated her way through the Lethbridge Pronghorns defence on her way to scoring a goal this weekend at Clare Drake Arena. The Pandas won both games by a combined score of 10-0.



JON OROPEZA, ROBERT SCOBLE, LEE LEFEVER, MEGAN MALLEN/SUPPLIED

Amateur athletics gets short stick between the Olympics



EVAN
DAUM

Sports
Commentary

Just 12 short months ago, Canadians were beginning to don their red mittens and new Team Canada sweaters ready for the Vancouver Olympics. Anticipation and pride was in the air as the country turned its attention to both amateur and some not-so-amateur athletes representing their country. But as it turns out, the interest in amateur athletics was just a blip on the radar.

Fast forward to today, and that love of our amateur athletes has quickly faded away. Our pride has been shelved for at least another year or so when the London 2012 games will remind Canadians that there are a whole lot of athletes

out there dedicating their lives to being the best in sport.

While the lack of attention for our amateur athletes between Olympic Games isn't new, it's still sad. Take for instance this past weekend — a few golden days for Canadian amateur athletes, with one first-place performance coming in the pool and another on the snow.

An Olympian in Beijing, swimmer Brent Hayden won gold this weekend in the 100-metre freestyle at the Austin Grand Prix in Austin, Texas — a race that attracts the top aquatic athletes in the world. Hayden, a Mission, B.C. native, beat out the likes of American Ryan Lochte, a six-time Olympic medalist among others. Hardly anyone north of the border will take notice. Chris Del Bosco will know the feeling, too; he took home gold this weekend in France, winning a World Cup ski-cross event.

Both athletes are among the best in the world in their respective sports, but unless you're an ultra-dedicated fan, Canadians could care less since the bright lights of the Olympics aren't on.

I'd be the first to admit: it's tough following amateur sports in this country. You can't expect to see 10 minutes of swimming coverage off the top of SportsCentre anytime soon, and that makes being a supporter of certain sports more difficult. But whatever you do, don't point the finger squarely on sports fans for not appearing to care.

Why did Canadians latch onto the Olympics in an outpouring of patriotism last February? The superb media coverage of the Games had a lot to do with it. But, in the past year, those networks attention to amateur sport has been minimal at best. It's not only disappointing, it's bad business.

With the Olympic broadcast consortium of CTV Inc. and Rogers Communications Inc. showing the Summer Games in London next summer, and with their eyes on bidding for the broadcast rights for the Sochi and Rio de Janeiro Games in a few years time, pumping money into broadcasting premier amateur sporting events between Games would go a long way in building an amateur sporting audience in this country.

By putting money into covering amateur sports

in the inter-Olympic years, broadcasters would be building the foundation of their Olympic Games coverage by creating a fan base, and in turn a stronger bargaining position with advertisers.

Even though the CBC broadcasts amateur sports throughout the year, it's going to take TSN to build the amateur sports brand in this country just like they've done with the CFL. The network created a bigger TV audience for Canadian football, and in turn elevated the stature of the league, creating more lucrative advertising opportunities for the network.

If you can get sports fans to watch scruffy-looking goofballs sit around a poker table, selling real sports featuring the most gifted athletes in the world is more than doable. It's time sports broadcasters realize there's an untapped sporting market out there, because after all, sports fans want to see the best in the world, and athletes like Hayden and Del Bosco are just that.

Here's to hoping TSN decides it's worth their time and money to cover amateur sports before, and not just during, the Olympic Games.



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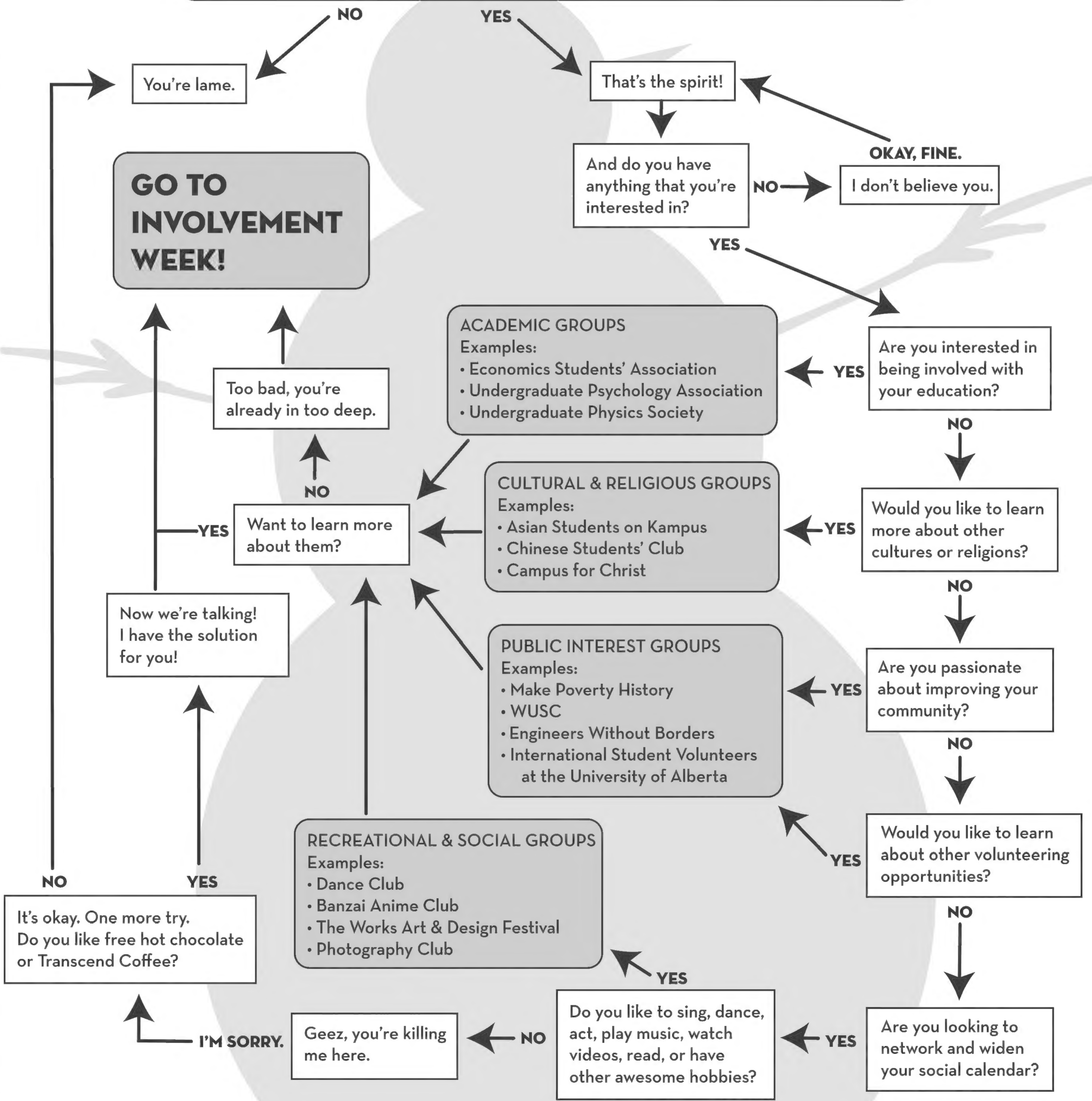
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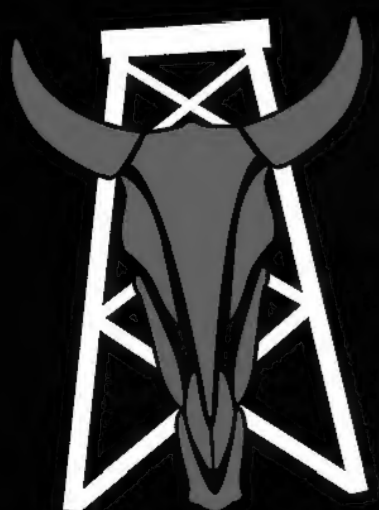
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